

# **IMPACT OF THE ATEC MENTOR PROGRAM ON DAWIA CERTIFICATION**

**RESEARCH REPORT**



**May 2011**

**Published by Stephanie J. Halcisak  
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**U.S. ARMY EVALUATION CENTER  
4120 Susquehanna Avenue  
Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21005**

### **DISCLAIMER**

The contents of this paper are the sole result of the research performed by the author. The results are the opinions solely of the author and do not reflect the opinions of the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command, the Defense Acquisition University, or the U.S. Army.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In April 2010, Research Report 10-004 titled, “Mentoring of the Acquisition Workforce at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland,” examined mentoring of the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) workforce. In particular, the report investigated two principal questions. First, the report studied what scope, mentorship training, and key characteristics were necessary for an Aberdeen Proving Ground mentor program to improve acquisition and leadership training, education, experience, and succession planning. Second, the report explored the level of senior leadership support for a career mentoring program at Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The report concluded that while there was a strong foundation of support for career mentoring programs, it was unclear what form that career mentoring program should take. In addition, the report identified a key area of concern regarding the defense acquisition certification program. In particular, data relating to acquisition certification compliance indicated low certification compliance percentages of approximately 30 percent to 40 percent of the acquisition workforce not certified. This low compliance rate does not appear consistent with the overwhelming support from senior leaders for the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) certification program. Determining this discrepancy is the basis of this project. Existing research will be examined and applied to the U.S. Army Evaluation Center (AEC) acquisition workforce which is a subcommand of the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC).

While addressing a specific concern of previous research and adding to the body of knowledge concerning mentorship and certification compliance at the U.S. AEC, this report also will analyze interviews of ATEC Training Program managers to explore the discrepancy indicated in previous research regarding low certification compliance rates despite overwhelming senior leader support. Furthermore, recent guidance has been sent to AEC/ATEC employees stating that certification compliance will now be enforced with a minimum objective of 75 percent. The Commanding General (CG) of ATEC will scrutinize compliance and take action toward improving compliance rates.

This study will use a survey instrument/interview questionnaire to collect data from the AEC workforce to find out what knowledge its members have regarding AEC Mentorship/Career Development Program, acquisition certification requirements, their current level of certification, if they are in compliance (correct certification level for current position), and what obstacles exist in obtaining certification in their respective career field, whether they have an Individual Development Plan (IDP), and whether they meet their annual continuous learning point (CLP) requirements, etc. For many individuals within the organization, I would suspect that overwhelming workloads (Rapid Acquisition Initiatives/GWOT acquisition efforts that have been prevalent since 2003 and the numerous other mandatory annual training requirements) are factors in not meeting certification compliance.

An overwhelming workload may also prevent adequate time for online and resident training, rather than inadequate mentor training, resulting in certification delinquency. This researcher also will review the current AEC Mentor/Career Development Training program to examine the level of



guidance provided regarding program certification, timelines, and process to take courses and apply for certification. While all employees are required to prepare and maintain an IDP upon employment and the mentor program provides guidance, if the individual does not pursue certification, it is unclear if all supervisors enforce compliance or make it a part of an individual's annual performance appraisal. Certification may be viewed as time taken away from supporting critical acquisition programs. However, being certified is a critical function of supporting acquisition programs.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

The U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC), located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, is the nation's pre-eminent Test and Evaluation Command. It consists of a highly professional military and civilian workforce that plans, integrates, and conducts experiments, developmental testing, independent operational testing and independent evaluations and assessments to provide essential information to acquisition decisionmakers and commanders. ATEC focuses on the acquisition capabilities supporting warfighters engaged in support of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), and traditional acquisition. As such, developing and sustaining the acquisition workforce is critical to the ATEC mission.

### **Purpose**

As part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), ATEC Headquarters will be relocated from Alexandria, VA, to Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, by September 2011. This move is expected to result in a loss of experienced and certified acquisition professionals who will choose not to relocate. In addition, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) announced on April 6, 2009, (Defense Acquisition Workforce Report, 2010) that there will be an increase DoD Acquisition workforce by 19,987 in FY 2009 through FY 2015. Additionally, in an Army Acquisition Workforce General Officer/Senior Executive Service (GO/SES) quarterly briefing, OSD estimated that Army Acquisition Growth across the fiscal year development plan (FYDP) will be 5,085. Given (1) the expected loss of experienced acquisition professionals that will not BRAC to APG and (2) the expected influx of newly hired personnel at APG (via either in-sourcing, hiring individuals new to government, or hiring individuals with previous government experience but who are new to acquisition) further demonstrates the imperative need to ensure that the mentorship and professional development program is robust enough to develop new acquisition workforce professionals while sustaining the current acquisition workforce. The purpose of this research is to examine the AEC Mentorship/Career Development Program and DAWIA certification of the AEC workforce to better understand if it adequately prepares the AEC acquisition workforce to meet the DAWIA certification requirements of their acquisition career field.

Previous research indicated that despite senior leader support, DAWIA Certification compliance was not being met at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Two principal questions are investigated: (1) Are DAWIA certification compliance rates being met at AEC and (2) What key characteristics are needed in the ATEC career mentoring/professional development program to improve acquisition training certification compliance rates and career development to develop and sustain the acquisition workforce?

## **Overview of Methodology**

This research project utilized an applied research methodology involving descriptive research. Data was collected to test the hypothesis and investigate the workforce perception of the effectiveness of the AEC Mentor/Career Development Program in preparing the workforce to understand and meet DAWIA certification requirements. Qualitative data was collected by surveying the target population. The target population is both supervisory and nonsupervisory U.S. Army Evaluation Center Acquisition Workforce employees at AEC-N and AEC-S.

## **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research project is to add to the body of research on mentoring and to apply lessons learned unique to AEC regarding DAWIA certification compliance. ATEC faces numerous, mission-related challenges over the next few years including BRAC, consolidation efforts, funding shortages, manpower reductions, etc. To remain a premier test and evaluation organization valued by its customers, it is necessary to ensure that the Army sustains a high-quality, high-performing workforce of acquisition, technology and logistics professionals. The Department of Defense (DoD) depends on this workforce as its greatest asset, one that is critical to DoD's success. Given that there are formal mentor programs in place with the overwhelming support of senior leadership, why is the DAWIA certification compliance rate so low?

## **Research Hypothesis**

ATEC leadership supports mentoring of the workforce, and there is an AEC Mentor Program. Likewise, DAWIA certification requirements of at least 75 percent have been directed since 2006. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: The AEC mentor program provides adequate guidance to the workforce for individuals to understand certifications requirements and how to meet them.

H2: The AEC mentor program does not provide adequate guidance to the workforce regarding acquisition career field certification requirements and how to meet them.

This researcher's hypothesis is that the U.S. Army Evaluation Center provides adequate guidance to the workforce via the Mentor/Career Development Program, allowing members to understand certification requirements and how to meet them.

## **Limitations of this Study**

One of the limitations of this study is that the targeted AEC population is a subcommand of its headquarters, the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC). ATEC has three subcommands: AEC, DTC, and OTC. While ATEC guidance is followed by each subcommand, each has individual mentor and career development programs that were not examined as part of this research. It is unclear if best practices are being shared among the subordinate commands or at ATEC headquarters.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

In recent years, mentoring research from 1980 to 2009 has examined a wide variety of topics with some shifts in focus and emphasis. A 2010 Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, and Wilbanks review of studies explicitly examined formal mentoring and specified that the period from 2005 to present has generated the greatest quantity of formal mentoring research. Furthermore, according to Haggard et al. (2010), although the role of developmental networks in one's career has been acknowledged by mentoring scholars since the earliest years, only in recent years has this phenomenon been provided significant attention in the research literature.

#### **Formal versus Informal Mentoring**

Mentoring typically consists of either a formal or informal relationship between two people. In a formal mentor relationship, a senior mentor (commonly outside the protégé's chain of command or supervision) is matched to a junior protégé with organizational assistance. Formal mentor programs are structured, have oversight, and have clear and specific organizational goals. An informal mentoring relationship is developed spontaneously, without organizational assistance. It has minimal to no structure or oversight and may or may not have a clear and specific goal. The success of either type of mentoring depends significantly on clearly defined roles and expectations in addition to participants' awareness of the program's (Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2008). For the purpose of this study, the term "mentor" refers to a more senior individual who provides guidance, assistance, wisdom, possesses a clear knowledge of the organization, and sponsors the career of a more junior person.

#### **Benefits of Mentoring**

Mentoring has been identified as an important influence in professional development in both the private and public sector, and according to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 2008), formal mentoring programs can increase morale, organizational productivity and career development, and help facilitate continuity of organizational performance. Research by Haggard et al. (2010) indicated that mentoring results in benefits such as increased job satisfaction, higher pay, and more promotions for protégés. OPM's "Best Practices: Mentoring Guide" provided additional reasons that agencies choose to establish mentoring programs.

- **As part of the on-boarding process:** Mentoring helps new recruits, trainees, or graduates settle into the organization.
- **Skills enhancement:** Mentoring enables experienced, highly competent staff to pass their expertise on to others who need to acquire specified skills.
- **Professional identity:** Younger employees early in their careers need help understanding what it means to be a professional in their working environment. Professionals embody

the values of the profession and are self-initiating and self-regulating. Mentors play a key role in defining professional behavior for new employees. This is most important when employees first enter the federal workforce.

- **Career development:** Mentoring helps employees plan, develop, and manage their careers. It also helps them become more resilient in times of change, more self-reliant in their careers and more responsible as self-directed learners.
- **Leadership and management development:** Mentoring encourages development of leadership competencies. These competencies are often more easily gained through example, guided practice or experience than by education and training.
- **Education support:** Mentoring helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. Formal education and training is complemented by the knowledge and hands-on experience of a competent practitioner.
- **Organizational development and culture change:** Mentoring can help communicate the values, vision and mission of the organization; a one-to-one relationship can help employees understand the organizational culture and make any necessary changes.
- **Customer Service:** Mentoring assists in modeling desired behaviors, encouraging the development of competencies in support of customer service, and above all, cultivating the right attitudes.
- **Staff retention:** Mentoring provides an encouraging environment through ongoing interactions, coaching, teaching, and role modeling that facilitates progression within the organization. Mentoring has been found to influence employee retention because it helps establish an organizational culture that is attractive to the top talent clamoring for growth opportunities. Mentoring is a tangible way to show employees they are valued and that the organization's future includes them.
- **Recruitment:** Mentoring can enhance recruitment goals by offering additional incentives to prospective employees.
- **Knowledge management/knowledge transfer:** Mentoring provides for the interchange/exchange of information/knowledge between members of different organizations.

Given the current environment of BRAC at APG, the influx of new acquisition professionals being hired at AEC, and SECDEF initiatives to further increase the acquisition workforce, AEC/ATEC must ensure their mentorship/career development programs adequately support DAWIA certification. As stated above, the benefits of mentorship can support this current environment by providing the benefits that AEC and other organizations at APG will need to develop and sustain its acquisition workforce.

### **Mentor Functions: Career Development and Psychosocial**

Research has shown that effective coaching and mentoring pays off not only in performance, but also increases job satisfaction and decreases turnover (Fast, 2009). Research on mentor

behaviors (functions), as discussed by Smith, Howard, & Harrington (2005), identified the most commonly cited and validated classification of mentor functions as (1) career development and (2) psychosocial. Five specific career development functions are cited to include exposure, protection, coaching, sponsorship, and challenging assignments. The general goal of these functions is to help protégés progress in their careers. In contrast, the psychosocial category depicts the psychological support that a mentor provides that enhances the protégés' self-efficacy, personal development, identify, and work-role effectiveness. In their study examining who mentors are (essential traits) and what mentors do (essential functions) Smith et al. (2005) theorize that there are four psychosocial functions of a mentor: counseling, friendship, role modeling, and acceptance/confirmation. Unlike the career development functions, psychosocial behaviors can be carried out for the protégé by a variety of individuals within the organization. Part of this research will determine if the AEC Mentor Program considers both mentor functions and if they affect DAWIA Certification.

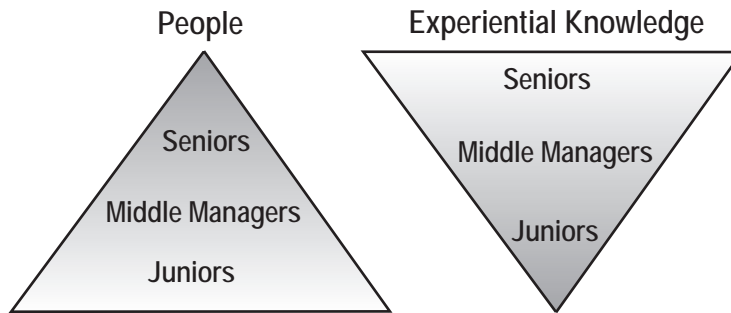
### **Measures of Mentoring – The Numbers**

Business and professional leaders know that mentoring is important. In an article from the Institute of Management & Administration (IOMA) titled, “Hard Number Measures of Mentoring” (2010), the importance of mentoring is clearly illustrated. While the vast majority of companies support mentoring, 71 percent of Fortune 500 firms have mentoring programs. In fact, 62 percent of employees who have received mentoring say they are likely to stay with their current employer. (“IOMA Report on Compensation & Benefits for Law Office”). According to the Center for Creative Leadership, Business Finance, 77 percent of companies report that mentoring programs are effective in increasing employee retention and performance. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) further adds (1) there is an 88 percent increase in managerial productivity when mentoring is involved, versus only a 24 percent increase with training alone, (2) the loss of an employee costs the corporation 150 percent of the departing employee's annual salary (recruitment, selection, training, lost productivity), (3) instruction and advice given by a mentor is 100 percent relevant because it is tailored to specific needs, compared to the 15 percent to 20 percent relevance of standard formal group training.

### **Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Acquisition Knowledge Loss**

One of the biggest knowledge management challenges facing the DoD organizations is undergoing a BRAC move. Organizations affected by BRAC face a devastating loss of knowledge because some will lose not just 30 percent but possibly 70 percent of their current workforce (McCallum, 2008). Furthermore, there does not appear to be an established process within the federal acquisition community to capture, adapt, and transfer—on a consistent, disciplined basis—the workforce's relevant knowledge, information, and more important, experience and insight. Figure 1, the Desired Workforce/Knowledge Relationship illustrates the desired proportion of acquisition experience and insight balance with people.

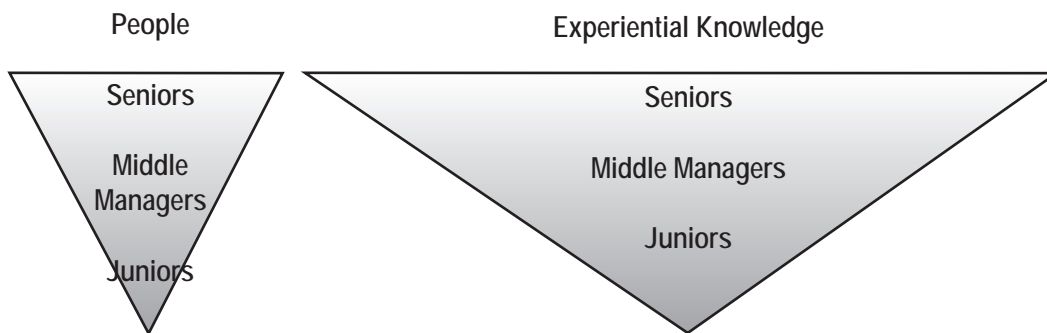
**Figure 1. Desired Workforce/Knowledge Relationship**



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Figure 2, Actual Workforce/Knowledge Relationship, illustrates the current environment with the federal acquisition workforce evolving with a greater number of senior-level professionals rather than mid- and junior-level professionals. And these seniors have the greater share of knowledge and experience. This can be attributed to the sheer size of the senior workforce pool relative to the rest of the work force. This current proportion is not ideal and consequently, knowledge can rapidly disappear when large numbers of the senior workforce depart within a fairly short time period.

**Figure 2. Actual Workforce/Knowledge Relationship**

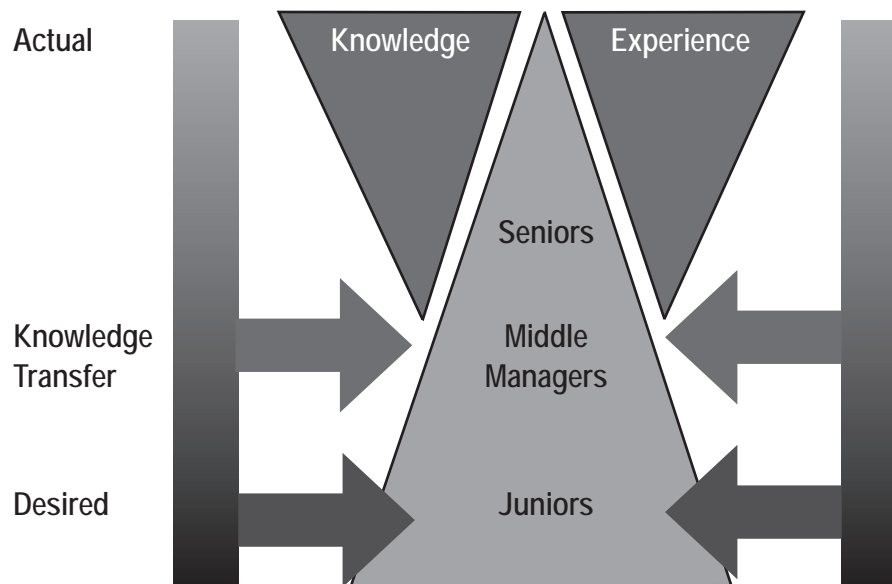


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The desired relationship is provided in Figure 3, Moving from Actual to Desired. This model requires that knowledge and insight/experience is transferred from the soon-to-be departing senior-level personnel to mid- and junior-level personnel. According to Kaplan (2008), one of the actions that can be taken now to move toward the desired knowledge transfer relationship between junior and senior acquisition workforce members is to establish mentorship opportunities for the next generation of federal acquisition professionals.



**Figure 3. Moving From Actual to Desired**



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In examining this particularly construct, Kaplan (2008) posited that the federal acquisition community is an experience-based profession in which the skills and insight necessary for success are learned primarily through hands-on efforts and through mentorships. Therefore, providing professionals with a combination of technology, training, and education alone will not suffice. There must be a “deliberate and structured means to capture and transfer the requisite know-how and know-why that comprise the experiential side of this multidimensional profession.” (Kaplan, 2008) Actions to take now, according to Kaplan, include establishing mentorship and internship opportunities for the next generation of federal acquisition professionals.

### **Different Types of Knowledge**

According to McCallum (2008) most knowledge constructs establish a difference between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is defined as knowledge that is easy to capture and transfer. Typically, this type of knowledge is already documented and stored – files, standard operating procedures, presentations in shared folders, document libraries, or collaborative portals/sites. In contrast, tacit knowledge is more difficult to access. It is the knowledge that people carry around in their minds. As such, tacit knowledge is considered more valuable because it provides context for people, places, ideas, and experiences. The tacit aspects of knowledge are inherently more difficult to codify and share and are typically transmitted via training or gained through personal experience.

If important knowledge is tacit knowledge, how does it reach those who need it? Without direct, face-to-face contact, it is difficult to effectively spread tacit knowledge throughout an organization.



Training newcomers in an organization is time-consuming because they must learn their new job while simultaneously performing new job duties. This can result in inefficiency, slow job execution, and increased costs through making mistakes (i.e. in the acquisition community's cost-schedule-performance environment). McCallum speculates that these costs could otherwise have been avoided by capturing the wisdom gained by others and transferring this tacit knowledge. One system he identifies in knowledge capture-and-transfer is the protege-mentor relationship.

## **Defense Acquisition Workforce Initiatives**

Given the current environment of BRAC, influx of new acquisition professionals being hired at ATEC, and SECDEF initiatives to further increase the acquisition workforce, AEC must ensure their mentorship/career development programs adequately support DAWIA certification. As stated above, mentorship can support the current environment by providing benefits the organization will need to develop and sustain its acquisition workforce. DAWIA certification requirements are mandatory and must be met by the organization. In the 2010 Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Strategy, the President and Secretary of Defense directed unprecedented "restoration" of the defense acquisition workforce. This initiative includes both increasing the size and improving the quality of the workforce. This strategy states that the President, Congress, Secretary of Defense, and DoD senior leaders are committed to restoring, shaping and improving the acquisition workforce. The Department's strategy is supported by workforce initiatives that will grow, enhance, and sustain a high-quality workforce. This includes: (1) recruiting and hiring, (2) retention and recognition incentives, and (3) training and workforce development initiatives.

This strategy also includes a message from Ashton B. Carter, the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. Mr. Carter says, "I have made sustaining a high-quality, high-performing workforce one of my top priorities. The key to improving acquisition outcomes is our people. DoD depends on a diverse and knowledge-based workforce comprised of acquisition, technology, and logistics professionals. They are our greatest asset and are critical to our success.... Workforce size is important, but quality is paramount."

Defense Secretary Robert Gates' strategic sizing and shaping of the acquisition workforce supports the implementation of the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform act of 2009, Section 102. Component workforce growth results in FY2009 and FY2010 are aligned with the strategic priorities in contracting, systems engineering, program management, cost estimating, auditing and other critical functions (Defense Acquisition Workforce Report, 2010). Table 1, from the Defense Acquisition Workforce Report provides an illustration of the targeted growth of selected career fields. Table 2-1 highlights which components of growth will contribute most to improving acquisition outcomes.

Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) Career Field/Career Path	FY09 – FY15 % of Total DAW Growth	FY109 – FY 15 % Career Field Growth
Contracting	26%	23%
Systems Planning, Research, Development & Engineering (SPRDE) (Program & Systems Engineering Career Paths)	22%	16%
Program Management	11%	19%
Life-Cycle Logistics	9%	16%
Business (Cost Estimating & Financial Management Career Paths)	7%	23%
Production, Quality and Manufacturing	5%	13%
Audit	3%	20%
Information Technology (Acquisition)	2%	14%
Facilities Engineering	2%	10%
Test & Evaluation (Acquisition)	1%	5%
Industrial and/or Contract Property Management	0%	12%
SPRDE-Science and Technology Career Path	0%	10%
Purchasing	0%	3%
Other/Unallocated Growth	12%	
*On April 6, 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert R. Gates announced his intent and recommendations to change the Department's strategic direction and reform the acquisition process. This change resulted in an increase of the DAW by 20,000 employees.		

**Table 2-1. Defense Acquisition Workforce:  
(1) Projected Percent of Total Workforce Growth by Career Field; and  
(2) Percent Increase In Career Field Growth Through FY 2015.**

Mr. Gates' Defense Acquisition Workforce Initiatives have support from the President and Congress. All agree it is critical to "grow and reshape the workforce to meet current needs with special emphasis and focus on improving workforce quality." (Defense Acquisition Workforce Report, 2010) Mentorship/professional development will be vital in meeting certification requirements as well as these initiatives and ensuring the ATEC mentor/career developments supports the strategies and initiatives of this current environment is worthy of this research.

### **Key Defense Acquisition Workforce Initiatives**

The AEC/ATEC mentorship/career development program should be aligned with some of the key defense acquisition workforce initiatives as outlined in the report. The following are some of the key defense acquisition workforce initiatives outlined in the Defense Acquisition Workforce Report:

**Achieve the SECDEF Growth Strategy—20,000.** This initiative is important because it is the "cornerstone of the Secretary's initiatives to right-size, rebalance and improve the overall quality of the acquisition workforce." (Defense Acquisition Workforce Report, 2010) This initiative directs

that all components will ensure appropriate force planning strategies are in place to execute and sustain component workforce growth.

**Establish enterprise certification goals as a management tool for improving workforce quality.**

This initiative is important because a critical element for achieving acquisition success is having a highly qualified workforce. Because certification standards drive workforce quality, improving the percentage of workforce members that meet or exceed certification requirements will contribute to developing and sustaining a highly qualified workforce. The Department's evolving workforce quality strategy includes a proposed Acquisition Qualification Standards (AQS) metric that will enhance the current certification program. In addition, AQS will increase the supervisor and employee mentoring process to validate and improve job performance qualifications.

**Establish robust recruiting strategies focused on interns, journeymen, and Highly Qualified Expert (HQE) initiatives.** The Secretary's growth strategy will increase the organic acquisition workforce by approximately 20,000 over five years. This growth coupled with normal acquisition workforce replenishment (8,000 – 10,000 annually) will require robust hiring strategies and tools. Furthermore, the Department must continue to mitigate the loss of a very experienced workforce. Approximately 63 percent of the workforce is in the Baby Boomer and Traditional generations. Success in preparing for their departure requires action now.

These initiatives are designed to restore, build, and optimize the capability and capacity of the defense acquisition workforce. The AEC mentorship/career development program should be aligned with these initiatives. In examining the AEC mentorship/career development program impact on certification compliance, it will also be determined if they are aligned with the SECDEF initiatives.

**AEC MENTORSHIP/CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

In reviewing ATEC Policy, guidance and senior leader support is provided for training, mentorship, and career development. In a February 2006 memo provided to all AEC directors, ATEC provided a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the AEC Civilian Mentor Program. The SOP established the Mentor Program for the organization as part of the Career Development Program. In November 2007, a memo provided FY08 Training and Career Development Guidance that again emphasized the AEC mentor program to cultivate and expand the technical and leadership skills of the AEC workforce.

While the AEC mentor program does not explicitly provide instructions regarding DAWIA certification, other ATEC and DA policy does. According to Department of the Army Policy regarding acquisition career field certification policy and procedures, dated June 1, 2010, position certification must be obtained within 24 months of assignment to a position or a waiver must be initiated and approved for an additional 12 months. This date is based on how long the individual has been in a position(s) within the same acquisition career field (ACF) and the level required for the current position. ATEC Regulation 350-1 further states that the immediate supervisor will jointly develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with employees, review and update the employees' IDPs at least semiannually, provide employees the opportunity to attend training and professional development. This regulation further states that supervisors as well as employees are responsible

for ensuring that training and certification standards are met. ATEC Regulation 600-1 requires that employees have an IDP in place within 30 days of assignment, complete mandatory and desired training and earn 40 continuous learning points (CLPs) every year after certification is achieved.

## **DAWIA CERTIFICATION**

The Department of Defense (DoD) is concerned about the professionalism and competence of its acquisition workforce. Consequently, the training, education, and experience requirements of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) were signed into law in November 1990. DAWIA (H.R. 5211; P.L. 101-510; and now, 10 U.S.C., Chapter 87) was a mandate to the Pentagon to get the acquisition workforce certified. This Act required DoD to establish a process through which members of the acquisition workforce are recognized as having achieved professional status. Certification is the process by which it is determined that an employee meets the education, training, and experience standards required for a career level in any acquisition, technology, and logistics career field.

There are 16 career fields for which certifications are provided. These career fields include:

- Auditing
- Business – Cost Estimating
- Business – Financial Management
- Contracting
- Facilities Engineering
- Industrial and/or Contract Property Management
- Information Technology
- Life-Cycle Logistics
- Program Management
- Program Management—International Acquisition
- Production, Quality & Manufacturing
- Purchasing
- Systems Planning, Research, Development, and Engineering—Program Systems Engineer
- Systems Planning, Research, Development, and Engineering—Science and Technology Manager
- Systems Planning, Research, Development, and Engineering—Systems Engineering
- Test And Evaluation

By 2006, only 50 percent of the acquisition workers met or exceeded the education, training, and experience required for their positions. That number rose to 56 percent in 2007. To address the certification problem, the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Human Capital Strategic Plan (first issued in 2006 and updated in June 2007) identified two tasks. First, the components were to develop and implement strategies to meet target certification levels (targets were not defined in the plan). And, second, the oversight process was implemented to ensure workforce competency (USD[AT&L] Human Capital Strategic Plan, 2007, Tasks 1/4/1 and 6.2.2). (Fast, 2009) This report

will focus on T&E Certification at the U.S. Army Evaluation Center.

### **Compliance Rates Directed by Acquisition Career Manager**

In 2006, The Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Human Capital Strategic Plan directed that the components meet certification requirements and provided guidance to ensure workforce competency. To that end, ATEC/AEC mentorship policies and career development guidance was issued in response to numerous memorandums from the Director, Army Acquisition Corps from 2006 -2010. The guidance and policy illustrate AEC senior leader support and request for acquisition certification compliance. The following memorandums from the Director Acquisition Career Management provide increasing levels of scrutiny and enforcement of certification compliance:

- a. Memorandum, Enforcement of Mandatory Certification Requirements Relating to Acquisition Workforce and Corps Members. Oct. 12, 2006, LTG Yakovak, director, Acquisition Career Management. This memorandum stated that just **36 percent of the acquisition workforce was certified** in December 2006 and directed the following:
  - a. Achieve 75 percent compliance within 36 months—stating that the Army metrics showed the lowest level of compliance of all services.
  - b. Supervisors approve training requests for certification-related training.
  - c. Supervisors review, discuss and update the IDP of each assigned Acquisition workforce member at counseling milestones. Supervisors consider attainment of certification requirements as a criterion in subordinates' performance evaluations.
  - d. Stop funding developmental assignments or noncertification-related training for an Army ALT Workforce member who is not properly certified as required under DAWIA in accordance with the position certification requirements.
  - e. Ensure that DAU required training is resourced to meet requirements.
  - f. Understand that compliance with certification requirements is not separate from an organization's mission but rather an integral part of an organization's mission. Enforcing education, training, and career development is a leadership responsibility.
- b. Memorandum, Director Acquisition Corps (ACC) Guidance Memorandum No. 3, dated Sept. 30, 2007, LTG Ross Thompson III, director, Acquisition Career Management. This memorandum stated that **41.4 percent of the acquisition workforce was certified**, the lowest in DoD. This memorandum directed the following:
  - a. Increase the certification rate to at least 75 percent, requiring an annual increase of 15 percent in overall certification until required level is reached.
  - b. Ensure 100 percent of subordinate IDPs are discussed and updated during each rating cycle.
  - c. Make these goals explicit objectives in every leader's performance objectives.
  - d. Direct supervisors to review, discuss, and update subordinates IDPs, approve training requests for certification-related training, make attainment of certification requirements as a criterion in each employee's performance evaluations.
  - e. Provide get-well plan to measure certification compliance, IDPs, CLPs.
- c. Memorandum: Enforcement of Mandatory Acquisition Certification Requirements, LTG Phillips, Director, Acquisition Career Management, Aug. 18, 2010. The memorandum stated that **55.4 percent of the workforce is certified**. Memorandum

directed the following :

- a. Increase acquisition certification rate to a minimum objective of 75 percent.
- b. Ensure 100 percent of subordinates' IDPs are discussed and update each rating cycle.

These memorandums from Director, Acquisition Career Management, articulate the required DAWIA certification compliance rate.

Guidance has flowed down from the Director, Acquisition Career Management, through ATEC to AEC in the form of Mentor/Career Development Programs in order to comply with these requirements. Most recently; however, increased scrutiny and emphasis has been placed on acquisition certification compliance. In November 2010, a new Commanding General was welcomed at ATEC. With BRAC and Secretary Gates' initiatives, certification compliance has become even more of an ATEC priority that is tracked, measured and reported up the chain of command. In a recent meeting on the subject of acquisition certification, the Director of Acquisition Career Management said he was monitoring ATEC's 216 individuals (69 percent of the workforce) who have more than two years of service and are not yet certified. It was said that the director was confident that the ATEC CG could fix this problem. To that end, the AEC Director directed the DCSPER to collect information and statistics by name and SCA to ensure action is taken to address this issue. The new ATEC CG has said personnel development is a key focus for him and that supervisors need to ensure that the workforce is equipped to meet the expectations of their position, which includes meeting certification requirements.

## **Summary**

Developing, maintaining and sustaining the acquisition workforce provides challenges for ATEC, given the current environment of BRAC, continued loss of experienced workforce personnel, initiatives to increase the acquisition workforce by 20,000, and increased emphasis on certification compliance. Adequate Mentorship/Career development programs are critical in meeting these challenges as well as certification compliance as directed by the Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Acquisition Logistics and Technology.

This literature review provides a glimpse of the numerous studies, reviews, and articles pertaining to mentoring. It also illustrates the current environment at AEC necessitating a robust mentor/career development program in order meet certification requirements. A review of the literature on mentoring will be applied to the examination of the ATEC Mentor/career development program and ATEC data regarding DAWIA certification compliance in order to determine the impact of the ATEC Mentor Program on DAWIA certification compliance.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This research project followed an applied research methodology. Research performed is of the descriptive category. Data was collected in order to test the hypothesis using qualitative methods: The AEC mentor program provides adequate guidance to the work force for individuals to understand certifications requirements and how to meet them. Data was collected by conducting interviews with AEC Human Resources as well as by a survey of the AEC acquisition workforce. The survey represents a quantitative component of the study while the interviews represent a qualitative element.

#### **Research Perspective**

The research perspective of this study is from that of the AEC acquisition workforce and their viewpoint on the mentor program and DAWIA certification. This workforce consists of more than 600 individuals from AEC located in Alexandria, VA (AEC– South) and Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD (AEC–North). The endeavor attempts to understand the impact of the AEC Mentor/ Career Development Program on DAWIA certification. Surveys were administered anonymously via Army Knowledge Online (AKO). Both supervisory and nonsupervisory AEC acquisition workforce members completed the survey. The views and experiences of the AEC acquisition workforce could be expected to be similar to that of other ATEC subordinate commands (DTC, OTC) but were not part of this study.

#### **Research Design**

Methods chosen for this project include interviews and surveys. By looking at both methods, it was possible to get qualitative data from the AEC Human Resources and training directorate regarding the mentor program and DAWIA certification efforts at AEC. Additionally, data from the surveys would provide quantitative data. The combination of both types of data addresses the basic research question as well as the research hypothesis. Data based only on survey responses would not be adequate to apply to the research project questions: Given that there are formal mentor programs in place and they have overwhelming support of senior leadership, why is the DAWIA certification compliance rate so low?

#### **Research Instruments**

As previously stated, one survey instrument was utilized in support of data. Additional interviews were conducted with the Human Resources Directorate to specifically discuss the Mentor/Career Development Program and workforce issues, actions, and concerns.



## **Participants, Population, and Sample**

The survey's target population was the AEC acquisition workforce. Positions include nonsupervisory (GS-5 to GS-14), supervisory (GS-14 to GS-15), and Senior Executive Service (SES) individuals. These employees are primarily in the Test and Evaluation Career field and located at Alexandria, VA, or Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. AEC has a workforce of approximately 600. Three interviews were conducted with the Human Resources Directorate to obtain additional insight into the mentor/career development program and DAWIA Certification at AEC. Applied research was utilized for this research. The category of research method was descriptive. Methodology included interviewing Training Program Managers within ATEC (including the eight subordinate commands). Data collected on the acquisition workforce was downloaded from the Career Acquisition Personnel & Position Management Information System (CAPP MIS) system as of 1QFY11.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The definition of an acquisition position is that 50 percent or more of an individual's duties are in an acquisition career field. While the organization designates the position categories and levels, DAWIA I and II does the following:

- Mandates acquisition workforce requirements
- Establishes a single acquisition workforce
- Identifies required training, education and experience for all acquisition career fields and levels
- Provides the opportunity to acquire the education, training and experience necessary to qualify for senior acquisition positions.

DAWIA certification is based on three criteria: training, education, and experience in the acquisition career field. Position certification must be met within 24 months of being assigned to an acquisition position. Furthermore, certification level guidelines are as follows:

- Level I (Basic Level): GS 05-08
- Level II (Intermediate Level): GS 09-12
- Level III (Senior Level): GS 13 & above.

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an agreement between the individual and supervisor. It is required for each AL&T Workforce member to develop and IPT within 30 days of employment and updated annually. Unlike certification rates, the Army has seen increased compliance in meeting the DACMs goal of having 100 percent of IDPs updated within the past six months. If IDPs are updated every six months and certification is part of the IDP, why haven't certification rates increased at similar rates?

#### **Current AEC Mentor Career Development Program**

1. AEC Intern Program:
  - a. Outlines Training Requirements
    - i. Annual Mandatory Training
    - ii. DAWIA Certification Requirements
    - iii. Career Development
      1. Civilian Education System (CES)
      2. Technical Adviser: Intern is paired with technical adviser who provides technical guidance and advice
      3. Near Peer–Intern is paired with recent intern program graduate
2. AEC Civilian Mentor Program: AEC is committed to ensuring that all individuals

have the opportunity for career progression. The civilian mentor program is intended to foster career development while fulfilling organizational leadership, retention, and recruitment strategies. This program is protege-driven and designed to help facilitate growth by allowing proteges to be assigned or select a mentor volunteer to assist in guiding them in achieving short- and long-term career development goals. A shadow assignment is also included in the mentor program.

3. AEC Training and Career Development Guidance. This program is committed to the development and professional growth of all military and civilian employees. Supervisors play a key role in the planning and coordination of the development of their employees. Supervisors will ensure, within organizational workload and funding constraints, that individuals are provided time for planned training activities. In addition, supervisors will ensure that an IDP is created and maintained for each person they supervise, and that training resources are allocated fairly across the workforce. The IDP should reflect mission requirements as well as employee personal and professional development programs. The IDP will be reviewed and updated at least semi-annually, at the midyear contributions/performance counseling and at the end of the rating period. Supervisors are also responsible for documenting the completion of training, the awarding of continuous learning points and the evaluation of course content and its impact on the IDP. The focus of this program is to cultivate and expand the technical and leadership skills of the AEC workforce via the following:
  - a. Mentor Program: When a new intern or employee arrives at AEC, he or she will immediately be assigned a mentor to guide and encourage them through their on-the-job training. The mentor, who is a seasoned employee not in the chain of the protégé, will be available for regular and ad hoc coaching and consulting sessions. The success of this program relies heavily on knowledgeable senior employees participating as mentors.
  - b. Developmental and Rotational Assignments. In order for AEC employees to continue to hone and develop skills throughout their careers, developmental and rotational assignments will be offered. This will broaden the skill base of the workforce.
  - c. Senior Service College. Current and future leaders must be trained to meet the ever-increasing challenges that today's military presents. This is important to the success of AEC and Department of Defense. The Senior Service College curriculums offer intensive management development.
  - d. Continuing Education. AEC provides continuing educational opportunities at all levels. Operating with budget constraints, AEC will strive to provide tuition assistance and sabbaticals to employees for courses that meet AEC's tuition assistance program guidelines.
  - e. Intern Training and Development: Supervisors and managers will ensure that YD-01s are meeting training and development requirements outlined in their IDP. Assess and focus training on weak areas to assist in supporting the mission. Explore new training and team bonding opportunities out of the classroom setting such as staff rides to Civil War battlefields, developmental and rotational assignments, directorate brown-bag lunches, and bimonthly presentations from internal and external sources.
  - f. Mandatory Training: Track mandatory training at the directorate/division level.

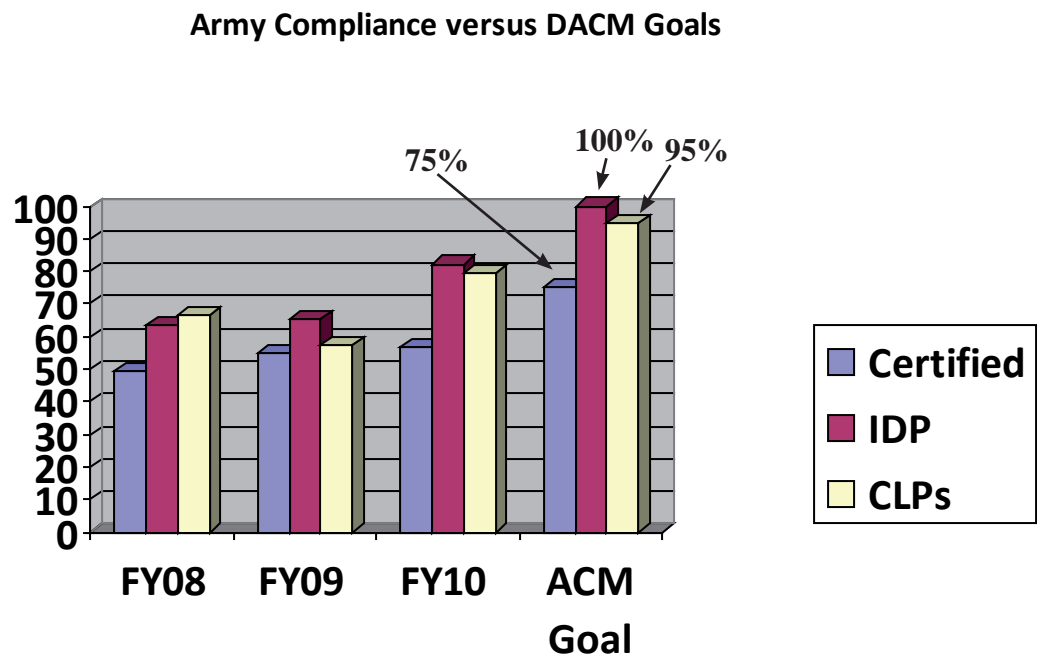
Supervisors and managers will make a conscious decision on what mandatory training is achievable.

- g. On-site Courses. On-site courses offer specialized training needed in developing system expertise in our evaluators.

## DACM Goals

The DACM has specified that Army Acquisition workforce compliance rates meet a minimum of 75 percent of the workforce certified in their acquisition career field within the required timeframe. Additional guidance was also provided requiring that (A) 100 percent of the workforce update their IDPs at least twice per year, and (B) that 95 percent of the acquisition workforce meet their annual requirement of 40 CLPs each year. Figure 1 illustrates these goals.

**Figure 1. Army Compliance Rates versus DACM Compliance Goals**



These acquisition certification rates apply to all Army acquisition career fields. Figure 1 provides actual compliance rates for FY08– FY10 as compared to the DACM goals. In FY08, FY09, and FY10, Army acquisition certification rates were at 49.3 percent, 54.8 percent, and 56.7 percent respectively. Although certification compliance rates were increasing, they remained below the 75 percent goal that had been articulated and tracked as far back as FY06. IDP compliance rates are also below the 100 percent compliance goal. In FY08, FY09, and FY10 IDP compliance rates were 63.4 percent, 65.5 percent, and 82.2 percent of the workforce updating their IDPs every six months. The workforce is also below DACM goal of 95 percent regarding the CLP requirement

of earning 80 CLPs every two-year cycle, with a goal of 40 CLPs each year. In FY08, FY09, and FY10, compliance rates were 66.4 percent, 57.4 percent, and 79.2 percent respectively. These figures indicate that despite the requirements for compliance AL&T workforce members are not meeting the standards for certification compliance, IDP updates, or CLPs.

### Army ALT Workforce Statistics

Army acquisition ALT workforce members have a total population of 43,894. DAWIA certification across organizations varies and Table 1 provides an overview of various acquisition organizations and their compliance rates regarding DAWIA certification, IDP, and CLP standards.

Organization	Population	Certified for Position	Not Certified for position	Not certified under 24 months	% Certified and under 24 months	Not certified over 24 months	% certified for position	% with No CLP	% IDP Updated < 6 months	% With No IDP
PEO Soldier	223	141	82	78	98.2%	4	63.2%	63.7%	91.9%	3.6%
PEO Ammo	271	199	72	69	98.9%	3	73.4%	69.4%	81.9%	0.4%
PEO Aviation	616	382	234	230	99.4%	4	62.0%	62.8%	87.7%	1.5%
PEO C3T	479	318	161	130	93.5%	31	66.4%	79.3%	83.3%	8.6%
PEO CS&CSS	478	343	135	121	97.1%	14	71.8%	10.5%	98.3%	1.0%
PEO EIS	657	432	225	212	98.0%	13	65.8%	37.0%	98.6%	0.5%
PEO GCS	154	104	50	45	96.8%	5	67.5%	14.9%	91.6%	5.8%
PEO IEWS	238	177	61	56	97.9%	5	74.4%	64.7%	91.2%	3.8%
PEO M&S	416	306	110	106	99.0%	4	73.6%	64.7%	93.3%	1.2%
PEO STRI	747	527	220	192	96.3%	28	70.5%	54.8%	94.9%	1.3%
PEO-I	221	166	55	45	95.5%	28	70.5%	54.8%	98.2%	1.4%
JPEO CBD	154	89	65	63	98.7%	2	57.8%	24.7%	94.2%	3.9%
MRMC	800	436	364	272	88.5%	92	54.5%	56.4%	68.3%	17.3%
ATEC	2306	1625	681	473	91.0%	208	70.5%	67.9%	82.4%	4.5%
AMC	29199	16721	12478	8412	86.1%	4066	57.3%	44.9%	80.7%	10.8%
COE	3944	1670	2274	1823	88.6%	451	42.3%	44.6%	66.6%	19.8%
SMDC	488	386	102	83	96.1%	19	79.1%	78.3%	90.6%	0.2%
Other*	2503	942	1561	1205	85.8%	356	37.6%	64.1%	53.9%	22.3%
<b>Total ALT</b>	<b>43894</b>	<b>24964</b>	<b>18930</b>	<b>13615</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>5315</b>	<b>56.9%</b>	<b>48.2%</b>	<b>79.1%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>

**Table 1. Acquisition Workforce as of Dec 9, 2010**

Table 1 illustrates the total Army acquisition workforce compliance rates for an understanding of the workforce. ATEC is one of the organizations on this chart and has a DAWIA compliance rate of 70.5 percent, which is approaching the requirement of 75 percent certified and 82.4 percent updating their IDP within the last six months. Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 ,6 below break out the DAWIA certification rates of ATEC HQ and its subordinate commands, which include AEC, DTC, and OTC.

**ATEC Acquisition  
Acquisition Certification—all career fields**

SCA	% Certified	% Delinquent*	DACM Goal
HQ	59.74%	15.58%	75%
DTC	71.65%	8.35%	
AEC	75.69%	6.63%	
OTC	65.22%	11.59%	
Overall	71.50%	8.52%	
*Uncertified personnel beyond the 24-month grace period. *ATEC working on correcting miscoded and incorrectly assigned personnel on ATEC's TDA. Corrections will result in increased certification percentages.			

**ATEC IDP Review in past six months**

SCA	% Reviewed	DACM Goal
HQ	64.94%	100%
DTC	90.53%	
AEC	82.32%	
OTC	86.96%	
Overall	88.14%	

### Survey Results and Analysis

Surveys were distributed to acquisition workforce employees of the U.S. Army Evaluation Center. The survey was provided to approximately 600 supervisory and nonsupervisory personnel and was open from Feb. 14 to March 6. There were 44 respondents for the nonsupervisory personnel survey and 22 respondents to the supervisory personnel survey. Nonsupervisory personnel range from GS-7 to GS-14. The supervisory groups includes employees with job titles of division chief or director who are responsible for the hiring, discipline, performance management, and termination of employees under their direct control.

### Survey Demographics

Survey was distributed via Army Knowledge Online (AKO) with a hyperlink to the AKO survey electronically mailed to the U.S. Army Evaluation Center distribution list. This list consisted of approximately 600 acquisition workforce personnel located in AEC-S and AEC-N. Two surveys were distributed. One survey was provided for Supervisory Personnel, and one survey was provided for Non-Supervisory Personnel. Because CAPMISS data had already been provided regarding acquisition workforce compliance, the purpose of the survey was primarily focused on workforce

perception of the AEC Mentor Program/Career development program.

### Survey: Personal Experience Regarding Mentorship/Career Development

The survey was designed to collect information regarding the respondents' personal experience with mentorship/career development from both a supervisory and nonsupervisory perspective. Data was analyzed to determine if the respondent received the positive benefits of such a program.

Item	Nonsupervisory Environmental Questions	Agree	Disagree
1	My supervisor generally approves my requests for training to maintain or increase my certification level or to satisfy my continuous learning requirements.	43 YES 98%	1 NO 2%
2	If my training request is denied, it is because my organization does not have the funds.	30 YES 68%	14 NO 32%
3	If my training request is denied, it is because my workload does not allow me the time.	16 YES 36%	28 NO 64%
4	My work duties allow me the opportunity to apply the training I receive.	35 YES 80%	9 NO 20%
5	I am actively engaged in my Individual Development Planning.	35 YES 80%	9 NO 20%
6	My supervisor plays a key role in my Individual Development Planning.	25 YES 57%	19 NO 43%
7	My performance review gives me information about my competency gaps, DAWIA Certification, and training needs.	21 YES 48%	23 NO 52%
8	I have the opportunity to work on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	31 YES 70%	13 NO 30%
9	I would benefit from working on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	40 YES 91%	4 NO 9%
10	A rotational assignment outside my immediate organization would broaden my expertise.	42 YES 95%	2 NO 5%
11	I am provided dedicated work time to complete required online training courses.	31 YES 70%	13 NO 30%
12	I am provided dedicated work time to complete required resident training courses.	35 YES 80%	9 NO 20%
13	I am provided time in order to meet the annual requirement of 40 continuous learning points (CLP).	33 YES 75%	11 NO 25%
14	I am certified at the appropriate level in my acquisition career field within the required time frame.	36 YES 82%	8 NO 18%
15	Acquisition Certification is part of my annual appraisal/rating.	18 YES 41%	26 NO 59%
16	I am aware that ATEC/AEC has a formal Mentor Program	24 YES 55%	20 NO 45%
17	The ATEC/AEC Mentor/Career Development Program provides adequate guidance for me to understand certification requirements and meet them.	15 YES 34%	29 NO 66%
18	I have a mentor/coach as part of the AEC Mentor Program	6 YES 14%	38 NO 86%
19	I do not have a mentor/coach, but would benefit from one.	26 YES 59%	18 NO 41%

Item	Nonsupervisory Environmental Questions	Agree	Disagree
20	I have a mentor outside of the AEC Mentor Program. (Informal mentor and/or arranged on my own)	7 YES 16%	37 NO 84%
21	I am able to get into the required DAU courses in order to meet my required level of DAWIA certification.	37 YES 86%	7 NO 14%
22	My workload does not allow time for me to complete required DAWIA acquisition career field training.	10 YES 23%	34 NO 77%
23	Additional Comments:		

## Nonsupervisory Environmental Survey Results

Twenty-two questions were presented for respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement. One of three responses could be chosen: Yes, No, or Not Applicable. One final question was presented as an open text response that was voluntary to complete. Table 1 shows the questions and associated responses as they relate to training and supervisory support for DAWIA related training.

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY QUESTIONS & RESPONSES (Nonsupervisory)	%AGREE	%DISAGREE
My supervisor generally approves my requests for training to maintain or increase my certification level or to satisfy my continuous learning requirements.	98%	2%
If my training request is denied, it is because my organization does not have the funds.	68%	32%
If my training request is denied, it is because my workload does not allow me the time.	36%	64%
My work duties allow me the opportunity to apply the training I receive.	80%	20%
I am provided dedicated work time to complete required online training courses.	70%	30%
I am provided dedicated work time to complete required resident training courses.	80%	20%
I am provided time in order to meet the annual requirement of 40 continuous learning points (CLP).	75%	25%
I am able to get into the required DAU courses in order to meet my required level of DAWIA certification.	86%	14%
My workload does not allow time for me to complete required DAWIA acquisition career field training.	23%	77%

**Table 1. Training Environment and DAWIA Certification**

A majority of the respondents agreed that their supervisor generally approves training requests for certification training. Most (98 percent) agreed that their supervisors approve training requests



to maintain or increase their level of certification or meet continuous learning requirements. Furthermore, most individuals also agreed that they are provided dedicated time to complete both online and resident certification courses with a response rate of 70 percent and 80 percent respectively. Likewise, 86 percent of the respondents agreed they were able to get the courses needed for certification training. This indicates that the workforce has the necessary support in requesting required and desired training and are provided dedicated time to complete this training, to meet their DAWIA certification requirements as well as the continuous learning requirements. It should also be noted that it was suspected that significant individual workload did not allow time for required certification training. To the contrary, only 23 percent of the respondents agreed with that statement. Instead, 77 percent of respondents disagreed with that statement, indicating that members of the workforce do not consider that their workload precludes them from meeting certification requirements.

With the AEC acquisition workforce agreeing it is provided adequate time and supervisory support for certification training, IDP participation was examined to determine if career development had more of an employee or supervisory emphasis. Table 2 provides the employee view of IDP planning within the organization. A majority of the acquisition professionals, 80 percent, agreed that they are actively engaged in the IDP planning. Only about half (57 percent) agreed that their supervisor played a key role in their IDP planning. This indicates that individuals are actively involved in the IDP planning and, therefore, DAWIA certification and career development efforts. This information is consistent with information provided from the CAPPMIS database indicating that 82 percent of ATEC acquisition professionals have updated their IDP within the last six months.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I am actively engaged in my Individual Development Planning.	80%	20%
My supervisor plays a key role in my Individual Development Planning.	57%	43%

**Table 2. IDP Planning**

IDP planning is the foundation for planning and tracking acquisition career certification requirement training as well as career development training. A majority of respondents indicated they are actively involved in their IDP planning. Therefore, additional survey questions examined the following questions:

- Are individuals certified at their required certification level?
- Does their annual appraisal/rating include certification level in their appraisal?
- And are they provided certification feedback during their reviews?

Most individuals, 82 percent, are certified at the appropriate level. Surprisingly, fewer than half agreed that acquisition certification is part of their annual appraisal or that they are provided information about DAWIA certification or competency gaps during their annual appraisals. This indicates that individuals are responsible for taking the initiative, managing their IDPs and working

toward certification requirements even though it is not part of their annual appraisal.

SURVEY QUESTION	%AGREE	%DISAGREE
I am certified at the appropriate level in my acquisition career field within the required time frame.	82%	18%
My performance review gives me information about my competency gaps, DAWIA Certification, and training needs.	48%	52%
Acquisition certification is part of my annual appraisal/rating.	41%	59%

**Table 3. DAWIA Certification and Annual Appraisal/Rating**

AEC individuals appear to understand DAWIA certification requirements and how to meet them because they are actively involved in their IDP planning and meeting DACM goals of 75 percent acquisition workforce compliance. In fact, AEC workforce compliance for certification was at 75.69 percent in December 2010. Additional survey questions explored career development. Table 4 provides the results of environmental survey questions on career development.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I have the opportunity to work on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	70%	30%
I would benefit from working on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	91%	9%
A rotational assignment outside my immediate organization would broaden my expertise.	95%	5%

**Table 4. Career Development**

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (70 percent) that they have the opportunity to work on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden their expertise. In addition, almost all agreed they would benefit working on different assignments—including a rotational assignment outside the organization. This indicates members of the workforce are actively either involved or interested in broadening their acquisition expertise.

Survey results indicate the AEC workforce is actively involved in IDP planning, career development, and is meeting DACM certification requirement in the acquisition career field. The final survey questions sought to examine the AEC mentor environment to determine the impact of the AEC mentor program on DAWIA certification. If the AEC acquisition workforce is meeting its certification requirements, does the AEC mentor program impact this?

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I am aware that ATEC/AEC has a formal Mentor Program	55%	45%
The ATEC/AEC Mentor/Career Development Program provides adequate guidance for me to understand certification requirements and meet them.	34%	66%
I have a mentor/coach as part of the AEC Mentor Program	14%	86%
I do not have a mentor/coach, but would benefit from one.	59%	41%
I have a mentor outside of the AEC Mentor Program. (Informal mentor and/or arranged on my own)	16%	84%

**Table 5. Workforce Insight into AEC Mentor Program**

While just over half of AEC respondents were aware of the AEC mentor program, just 34 percent agreed it provided adequate guidance to understand certification requirements and how to meet them. Just 14 percent of individuals responding agreed they had a mentor and just 59 percent agreed that would benefit from a mentor/coach. This data indicates that AEC acquisition workforce professionals are meeting their certification requirements. However, this is not because of the AEC mentor program, which does not provide adequate guidance regarding certification requirements and how to meet them.

The AEC mentor program itself does not appear to impact DAWIA certification. Although not substantiated, it is suspected the AEC Career Development Program provides adequate guidance to AEC acquisition professionals on DAWIA certification requirements and how to meet them. Additional research would be warranted to explore this hypothesis.

The final question of the survey was a voluntary open text response. Of the 44 respondents, 15 provided additional comments regarding DAWIA certification as well as other topics, including mentorship and training. Additional Comments from nonsupervisory personnel indicated the following responses:

- There is a general lack of awareness regarding the AEC Mentor program.
- There is a general agreement that supervisors provide adequate time for DAWIA certification and other training.
- Training and availability are not the issue. Mentors and team leaders with the time and skills to develop new personnel are lacking within AEC.
- Acquisition certification, CLPs, civilian education system are not part of the annual performance appraisal.
- It is difficult to juggle certification and all the other multiple, competing mandatory training requirements.
- Workload and manpower shortages are the biggest obstacle in completing training.

### **Supervisory Environmental Survey**

Fifteen questions, as illustrated in Table 6, were presented for respondents to indicate agreement

or disagreement. One of three responses could be chosen: Yes, No, or Not Applicable. One final question was presented as an open text response that was voluntary to complete.

Item	Managerial Question	Agree	Disagree
1	There is adequate time for my employees to participate in online training.	59%	41%
2	There is adequate time for my employees to participate in resident training.	59%	41%
3	My supervisor generally supports requests for my employees to participate in training.	100%	0%
4	I am able to provide adequate on-the-job training and guidance to develop my employees effectively.	64%	36%
5	My workload allows me the opportunity to manage my employees' development effectively.	41%	59%
6	My workload allows me the time to increase my managerial and leadership skills by attending training and workshops.	41%	59%
7	I play a key role in my employees' Individual Development Planning.	77%	23%
8	I have adequate resources and support to provide the training my employees need.	55%	45%
9	I provide feedback and information to my employees about their competencies, certification compliance, and training needs during their performance reviews.	95%	5%
10	My team is adequately staffed to allow time to complete operations and also provide mentoring/coaching and on-the-job training.	32%	68%
11	I would support my employees in identifying rotational assignments.	95%	5%
12	The ATEC/AEC Mentor Program provides adequate guidance for employees to understand certification requirements and meet them.	45%	55%
13	Certification Compliance is part of my employees' annual performance review/rating cycle.	68%	32%
14	Achieving 40 Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) per year is part of my employees' annual performance appraisal/rating cycle.	50%	50%
15	My employees update their Individual Performance Plan (IDP) twice per year.	50%	50%
Additional Comments:			

**Table 6 Survey: Impact of Mentorship/Career Development on DAWIA Certification**

Table 7 shows the questions and associated responses as they relate to training, career development, and senior leader support for DAWIA related training. Table 7 provides insight based on the supervisory perspective of career development/mentorship and DAWIA certification. While 95 percent of supervisors would support their employees in identifying rotational assignments, just 55 percent agreed they have adequate resources and support to provide the training their employees need. Likewise, supervisors do not agree that they are adequately staffed to allow time to complete operations as well as provide coaching and on-the-job training. Finally, it should be noted that 59 percent of supervisors considered there was adequate time for their employees to participate in online and resident training. It was suspected that employees would say they were not provided dedicated time to complete DAWIA training. However, 80 percent of employees responded that they were provided dedicated work time to complete required DAWIA certification resident courses and 70 percent agreed that they were provided dedicated work time to completed required online DAWIA training courses. This was an unexpected response, with more employees than supervisors agreeing there was adequate time to complete the required DAWIA certification training.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
There is adequate time for my employees to participate in online training.	59%	41%
There is adequate time for my employees to participate in resident training.	59%	41%
My supervisor generally supports requests for my employees to participate in training.	100%	0%
I have adequate resources and support to provide the training my employees need.	55%	45%
My team is adequately staffed to allow time to complete operations and also provide mentoring/coaching and on-the-job training.	32%	68%
I would support my employees in identifying rotational assignments.	95%	5%

**Table 7. Workforce Insight into AEC Mentor Program**

Supervisory respondents did not consider that there was adequate time or resources for the employees to take their DAWIA certification training. Consistent with that sentiment, 64 percent of supervisors agreed they are able to provide on-the-job training and guidance to effectively develop their employees as illustrated in Table 8. Likewise, just 41 percent of supervisors agreed that their workload allows them to increase their managerial and leadership skills or to manage their employees' development effectively.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I am able to provide adequate on-the-job training and guidance to develop my employees effectively.	64%	36%
My workload allows me the opportunity to manage my employees' development effectively.	41%	59%
My workload allows me the time to increase my managerial and leadership skills by attending training and workshops.	41%	59%

**Table 7. Workforce Insight Into AEC Mentor Program**

Table 8 examines the IDP from a supervisory perspective. While supervisory respondents did not consider that there was adequate time to provide guidance to develop their employees, 77 percent did agree that they played a key role in their employees' IDPs. This indicates that IDP planning is a high priority at AEC, which is reflected in the DAWIA certification rate. This is not consistent with the employee response in which 57 percent of employees agreed that their supervisor played a key role in the IDP. It is unclear why employees and supervisors saw a discrepancy in the role that supervisors played in Individual Development Planning. However, only 50 percent of supervisors agreed that their employees updated their IDP twice per year. It is unclear what effect this has on DAWIA certification because it could not be determined how often employees updated their IDP. DACM guidance states that 100 percent of IDPs should be updated twice per year.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I play a key role in my employees' Individual Development Planning.	77%	23%
My employees update their Individual Performance Plan (IDP) twice per year.	50%	50%

**Table 8. Workforce Insight into AEC Mentor Program**

After examining IDP planning, certification compliance pertaining to supervisor feedback and annual performance reviews was investigated. With AEC meeting DAWIA certification requirements, the survey attempted to explore what factors besides mentorship might influence individual to comply with certification requirements. As shown in Table 9, while 95 percent of supervisors agreed they provided feedback to employees regarding their certification compliance during performance reviews, just 68 percent made it a part of their annual performance rating. This indicates that employees are meeting DAWIA certification compliance even though it is not always a factor for their performance ratings.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
I provide feedback and information to my employees about their competencies, certification compliance, and training needs during their performance reviews.	95%	5%
Certification compliance is part of my employees' annual performance review/rating cycle.	68%	32%
Achieving 40 Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) per year is part of my employees' annual performance appraisal/rating cycle.	50%	50%

**Table 9. Workforce Insight into AEC Mentor Program**

The final question of the supervisory survey, as shown in Table 10, examined the perspective on adequacy of the mentor program in providing guidance for employees to understand and meet certification requirements. Fewer than half of supervisors responded that they considered the program adequate. Just 45 percent of respondents agreed the program was adequate. While supervisors did not agree that the program was adequate, employees are meeting their DAWIA certification compliance requirements, which indicates guidance is being provided, but not as part of the mentor program.

SURVEY QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE
The ATEC/AEC Mentor Program provides adequate guidance for employees to understand certification requirements and meet them.	45%	55%

**Table 10. Workforce Insight Into AEC Mentor Program**

The final question of the survey was a voluntary open-text response. Of the 44 respondents, 15 provided additional comments regarding DAWIA certification as well as other topics such as mentorship and training. Responses to the survey seemed to indicate that:

- There is a general lack of awareness regarding the AEC Mentor program.
- The AEC culture is very supporting of training, CLPs, IDPs, and rotational assignments. However, it can appear that training gets more priority than current mission.
- The increased workload with fewer employees (loss of overhires) has resulted in more work than there is time to complete. There is increasing mandatory training that takes more time from the mission. Elective training is sacrificed to complete the mission; however, mandatory training is rarely compromised but is difficult to schedule.

- Mission and morale impacts of the new AEC Certification and Lean Six Sigma initiatives beyond DAWIA certification should be examined. A functioning mentorship program at AEC is not apparent, yet the merit pay system appears to provide enough employee incentives. However, too much time is spent on administrative type training and too little on the technical development of the evaluator base.



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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The available evidence and theory are consistent with the view that the AEC Career Development Program does not impact DAWIA Certification. Despite mentorship not impacting certification, and certification not being a metric of an employee's annual appraisal, AEC has 75 percent certification compliance on the DACM requirements.

Other observations include the following:

1. The mentoring program is not applied consistently within ATEC. Subordinate commands follow different procedures.
2. Noncompliance does not appear to be a symptom of the lack of DAU class availability.
3. The AEC mentor program is more for career development of future leadership and professional development of the workforce than meeting DAWIA certification requirements.
4. AEC already has a robust intern development program to adequately prepare new employees for integration into the government—including certification compliance, meeting annual training requirements, and furthering their education.

#### **Interpretation And Implications Of This Research**

Supervisors did not believe there was adequate time or resources to support certification training, while employees did. In fact, employee responses indicated they were provided dedicated time to complete both online and resident training in support of DAWIA certification. Furthermore, employees are meeting their DAWIA certification compliance rates despite a general lack of awareness regarding the AEC Mentor Program. This indicates other processes are in place that provide guidance to the workforce regarding DAWIA certification compliance and how to meet these standards. This is further supported by the data that shows ATEC is DAWIA- compliant despite compliance not being a part of the employees' annual performance appraisal/rating cycle.

As ATEC consolidates the human resources and training elements of the headquarters subcommands, the mentorship and career development programs should be consolidated into one universal policy. This new policy should consider the following:

- Allow mentees to seek out colleagues and organizational leaders with the specific skills they are seeking to acquire/develop and approach them individually about an informal mentor relationship.
- Request volunteer mentors from the workforce. Mentoring is an extremely mutually beneficial relationship for both parties. Many individuals look forward to being a mentor, but won't do so until they are asked. Mentors feel entrusted with helping others

foster career and professional development, sharing learned business principles and perspectives, and an expanded purpose within the organization. Many of the potential mentors likely have been mentored themselves at some time in their career.

- A critically important factor is not the time spent in the mentoring session but the consistency of the sessions.

### **Limitations of this Study**

This study did not collect data regarding respondent years of service with the agency or grade level. These factors could influence data, but were not collected as part of this survey. In addition, the following questions were considered and responses requested; however, this data was not provided at the time this report was published and is considered a limitation:

- How many individuals are in the mentor program? Please go back five years if possible.
- Is there feedback provided by the protégé regarding the mentor relationship? If so, is this feedback positive? What types of feedback is typically provided regarding the program?
- The previous year's AEC Climate survey was requested to collect additional information regarding career development and mentorship; however, permission was not provided.
- What do you consider potential reasons for individuals not complying with mandatory certification requirements?
- What penalties or incentives, if any, are applied if an individual is noncompliant?
- Is training/mentorship provided regarding ACRB/IDP/Certification/Mentor programs available within ATEC?
- What are some of the reasons acquisition work force members are not able to be certified within the required time-frame? Based on your experience, is it high workload, DAU course availability, lack of understanding of certification requirement, incentive?

It would be worthwhile to address these questions and incorporate their responses into follow-on research for this topic. Also, consolidating such responses into an ATEC Mentor Program applied consistently across the subcommands would be worth additional research. At this time, each of ATEC's subcommands has a different mentor program.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

With ATEC reorganizing under BRAC and working toward consolidation of the three subcommand elements, additional research should be considered supporting the development of a commandwide Career Development/Mentor Program. This research examined career development mentor program of AEC and the impact on DAWIA certification. Additional research examining the best practice of the other subcommands (OTC, DTC) should be conducted and documented. These lessons learned and best practice may be applicable to other Army elements that are unable to achieve DAWIA compliance rates.

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## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS**

ACRB	Acquisition Career Brief
AEC	Army Evaluation Center
AEC-N	Army Evaluation Center– North
AEC-S	Army Evaluation Center– South
AKO	Army Knowledge Online
APG	Aberdeen Proving Ground
AT&L	Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
ATEC	Army Test and Evaluation Command
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CAPPMIS	Career Acquisition Personnel & Position Management Information System
CLP	Continuous Learning Point
DACM	Defense Acquisition Career Manager
DAG	Defense Acquisition Guidebook
DAWIA	Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
FYDP	Five-Year Development Plan
GAO	General Accounting Office (now known as the Government Accountability Office)
IDP	Individual Development Plant
IOMA	Institute of Management and Administration
IPT	Integrated Product Team
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operations
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense

SECDEF      Secretary of Defense

USD(AT&L)   Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics

## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

### **MENTORSHIP SURVEY**

#### **Nonsupervisory**

Permission has been provided by the Director, AEC to conduct this survey of the AEC workforce. This survey will support research for the DAU SSCF Senior Research Project, which is examining DAWIA Certification Compliance at AEC/ATEC. This survey is expected to take approximately 10 minutes for an individual to complete. There are two sections. The first section titled “Environmental Survey” is for individuals at the position of team leader and below. The second section titled “Managerial Survey” is for individuals in positions at the Division Chief level and above. For the Environmental/Managerial Questions below, please indicate yes or no.



### Mentorship Environmental Questions (NonSupervisory)

Item	Environmental Question	Agree	Disagree	Does Not Apply
1	My supervisor generally approves my requests for training to maintain or increase my certification level or to satisfy my continuous learning requirements.	YES	NO	NA
2	If my training request is denied, it is because my organization does not have the funds.	YES	NO	NA
3	If my training request is denied, it is because my workload does not allow me the time.	YES	NO	NA
4	My work duties allow me the opportunity to apply the training I receive.	YES	NO	NA
5	I am actively engaged in my Individual Development Planning.	YES	NO	NA
6	My supervisor plays a key role in my Individual Development Planning.	YES	NO	NA
7	My performance review gives me information about my competency gaps, DAWIA Certification, and training needs.	YES	NO	NA
8	I have the opportunity to work on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	YES	NO	NA
9	I would benefit from working on different assignments or in new areas of acquisition to broaden my expertise.	YES	NO	NA
10	A rotational assignment outside my immediate organization would broaden my expertise.	YES	NO	NA
11	I am provided dedicated work time to complete required online training courses.	YES	NO	NA
12	I am provided time in order to meet the annual requirement of 40 continuous learning points (CLP).	YES	NO	NA
13	I am provided dedicated work time to complete required resident training courses.	YES	NO	NA
14	I am certified at the appropriate level in my acquisition career field within the required time frame.	YES	NO	NA
15	Acquisition Certification is part of my annual appraisal/rating.	YES	NO	NA
16	I am aware that ATEC/AEC has a formal Mentor Program	YES	NO	NA
17	The ATEC/AEC Mentor/Career Development Program provides adequate guidance for me to understand certification requirements and meet them.	YES	NO	NA
18	I have a mentor/coach as part of the AEC Mentor Program	YES	NO	NA
19	I do not have a mentor/coach, but would benefit from one.	YES	NO	NA
20	I have a mentor outside of the AEC Mentor Program. (Informal mentor and/or arranged on my own)	YES	NO	NA
21	I am able to get into the required DAU courses in order to meet my required level of DAWIA certification.	YES	NO	NA
22	Additional Comments:			

Additional Comments from nonsupervisory personnel are provided below as follows:

- I am unaware of mentoring as a formal process in AEC
- Some of these questions were difficult to answer since they require a «yes» or «no.» For example, lack of funding is not always a reason for not being able to attend training. Sometimes it's due to schedule conflicts with program deadlines or milestones. It's also not true that my workload would always allow or preclude my ability to take training; it would preclude it sometimes (when training dates conflict with work deadlines), but in general my supervisor would approve training if funds are available and there are no negative impacts on my ability to perform my assigned duties by deadline.
- DAWIA and Continuous Learning are «background» activities, viewed as necessary boxes to check to maintain a job or to be promoted, but are not viewed as skill-enhancing activities in and of themselves.
- AEC Mentor Program seems to be a good in theory, poor in practice. If the mentor program is based on volunteers, there should be some Center or Command incentives/activities to also develop mentors. Most employees who at one time had a mentor reported little communication, or received mentors who were not able to fulfill what newer employees were looking for as help. Training and availability is not the issue, mentors and team leaders with the time and skills to develop new personnel are lacking within AEC.
- No one asked, but I am serving as a mentor to a junior analyst/evaluator.
- I did not know ATEC had a mentor program, although I did hear that interns had this sort of thing. Acquisition certification is not a part of my annual performance appraisal but neither are continuous learning points or civilian education system metrics. And also, what is the senior leader guidance to the workforce regarding certification in other career fields, life beyond the initial certification requirements ? Will the command support more, which would require maneuvering the workforce around the organization in order to get the work experience required to progress?
- Good, job relevant training is vital however I have not encountered a lot of that type of training in DAU. It is also difficult to juggle certification training for multiple competing requirements such as IASO, Security, AST Chair, LSS, DoE, T&E, Acquisition.
- I was not aware of the Mentor program. Since I am unaware, it is difficult to assess the information on the program as I have not reviewed it.
- Workload is the biggest obstacle in completing training. It is left up to me to decide what will affect my rating less: not doing my training or not doing my mission. With the war going on and working so many RI projects, training takes a back seat. Management does not appreciate how much time it takes to do a good, technical job on the mission work. The pat response from management is to get a contractor to do the mission while I take training. AEC promotes people who have taken the right courses but may not have done an analysis of their own.
- Recommend AEC Mentor Program information posted on the AEC Intranet for everyone's access.
- Already DAWIA certified in multiple areas, current workload requirements and manpower shortages make taking training very difficult.

### Mentorship Supervisory Questions (Supervisory Personnel)

Item	Supervisory Survey	Agree	Disagree	Does Not Apply
1	There is adequate time for my employees to participate in training.	YES	NO	NA
2	My supervisor generally supports requests for my employees to participate in training.	YES	NO	NA
3	I am able to provide adequate on-the-job training and guidance to develop my employees effectively.	YES	NO	NA
4	My workload allows me the opportunity to manage my employees' development effectively.	YES	NO	NA
5	My workload allows me the time to increase my managerial and leadership skills by attending training and workshops.	YES	NO	NA
6	I play a key role in my employees' Individual Development Planning.	YES	NO	NA
7	I have adequate resources and support to provide the training my employees need.	YES	NO	NA
8	I provide feedback and information to my employees about their competencies, certification compliance, and training needs during their performance reviews.	YES	NO	NA
9	My team is adequately staffed to allow time to complete operations and also provide mentoring/coaching and on-the-job training.	YES	NO	NA
10	I would support my employees in identifying rotational assignments.	YES	NO	NA
11	The ATEC/AEC Mentor Program provides adequate guidance for employees to understand certification requirements and meet them.	YES	NO	NA
Additional Comments:				

#### Actual Supervisory Responses:

- We are not staffed adequately to do all the training needed.
- When an employee is hired by AEC and comes from another Army MACOM (i.e. TRADOC, AMC, FORSCOM, etc.), there should be some mechanism already in place to award that employee either Fulfillment or other credit of some type toward their Acquisition Certification Level requirements. Currently

there is not.

- Some of the “no” responses were partial no’s. I answered “no” if the item was not done consistently but I did not like being limited to Y and N. We have time to do anything, but not everything. And often what we (and I) do is to a lower value than reasonable due to the overall number of things worked in a typical week. AEC’s culture is very supportive of training, CLPs, IDPs and rotational assignments, etc; but, there is a large void when training gets more priority than current mission And today that is certainly the case. I only answered “yes” if the item was being done consistently
- OJT certainly occurs...but this usually a nod towards getting employees to understand the nuances of how an individual section works: tweaking if you will. The real foundation to training is best when it comes from structured training outside the parent organization. Also, the IDP has become a tool where we ‘pencil whip’ what we believe to be what management wants to hear...adherence, imagination and deliberation is seldom the norm...
- I don’t really know what the AEC Mentor program has to say about certification. I also don’t think it matters because supervisors are supposed to ensure people know what is required of them. (I also never could accept the idea of a formal mentorship program.) With regard to having the continuous learning requirement as part of an employee’s objectives, they were a separate objective for us in C-IED until the irresistible drive to standardize objectives for major blocks of employees drove it out.
- Increased workload with decreased employees (loss of overhires) has left more work than time to conduct it. In turn, many employees sacrifice elective type training to stay and get the job done. Mandatory training is rarely compromised, but difficult to schedule.
- Please examine potential mission and morale impacts to work force of “AEC Certification” and ATEC “Continuous Process Improvement” (LSS) initiatives beyond what DAU requires. There is no functioning mentorship program within ATEC that I have observed in the past 11 years. Merit pay system is a decent incentive for employees to complete assigned training. However we spend far too much effort on admin. training and far too little on technical development of our evaluator base.
- My employees are not required to be acquisition certified; they are support employees.
- Resources are slim, vs. increasing mission. Essentially one deep, with coverage of some areas wanting. If I lose someone, we can’t get a replacement so mission accomplishment suffers, even if not apparent to higher-ups. Division chief administrative burdens increasing. Bring back secretaries? Time to mentor and provide OJT harder to find. We must make time for training to keep ahead of the “power curve” but increasingly difficult to do so. Example: 70+ page T&E Concepts now vs. 2 pages when they started. More mandatory training takes more time from mission. Dedicated folks work more hours.